

AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

NEWS FLASHES.

October,

1939

The Gallery is starting the fall season of 1939 with a number of new aspects. The Loan Galleries have been closed for several weeks while the walls have been redecorated. In the North and South galleries, an off pink that is almost ashes of roses has been used and in the central room, an oyster white. It is hoped that not only will these colours add to the interest of the galleries but also they will serve as an admirable foil for the contemporary art which is usually hung there. Similar changes to bring more colours into other galleries are being planned.

Daniel MacMorris has completed the decoration of the vaults of Rozzelle court, a work that has been going on for almost two years. The Renaissance arabesques and figures tone in beautifully with the pinks and yellows of the Mankato stone and more than ever now, our court recalls some of the Italian prototypes.

LOAN EXHIBITIONS: A most interesting group of paintings will inaugurate the winter season of loan exhibitions and it is one of great local interest. It will consist of works by the Wichita artist, John Noble, who died in 1934. The group was gathered together by his wife and is in the nature of a memorial exhibition. Mrs. Noble has always been most interested in our Gallery, has visited it a number of times and it was her express wish that the show open in Kansas City.

John Noble was perhaps the first native mid-western artist to gain international fame, and he was certainly the most colourful of his generation. He was born on the site of Wichita when that spot was still a wilderness. The exact date of his birth is not known, and with his characteristic humor, he once chose the year 1874 at random as his natal year. As a boy he drove long-horned cattle with his father and had little formal schooling. He once said he took his first painting lessons with the Indians.

While still young, he went to Cincinnati and attended the art academy there and became a popular cartoonist and barn-stormed the country practicing his talent. It was at that time he adopted the ten-gallon hat that he affected for the rest of his life. Tiring of cartooning, he took up the painting of nudes and it was one of his most famous and realistic, "Cleopatra at the Bath" in the bar of the Carey Hotel of Wichita that attracted the attention of the reformer, Carrie Nation, and which she destroyed with a well-aimed brick. This incident seemed to disgust him with the art appreciation of his native town, for he left soon after for Paris.

Here he took his art much more seriously, studying at the famous haunt of all bohemian artists, the Julian Academy and in Brussels. The ten-gallon hat became a familiar sight on the Montmartre boulevards, but real fame came the night that he rode into the Bal Bullier mounted on a horse and shooting at the chandeliers. This episode won him the title of "Wichita Bill", one which followed him all his life, and the accolade of all his fellow bohemians. This was his last great fling, for in 1906 he married an Alsatian girl and left Paris, going to Brittany where he remained nine years.

The foggy Breton coast, the simple fisher folk, appealed to him and he often joined the sardine boats, getting many of the ideas of his later paintings. Here he developed a passionate love of the sea, a love that only those born in a land-locked country can develop. From now on it became his mistress and the subject of most of his paintings. He loved the brilliant sun burning through the mists, or the eerie quality of moonlight with the fisherman dragging in their nets. He perfected now a warm, yellow glow in his canvases that seemed to catch the very heat of the sun. The charm of France did not pall on him until long after the war and he did not return to New York until 1920.

His European fame had preceded him and almost at once he began to win prizes. He exhibited everywhere and his paintings were eagerly bought. The \$1,000. Salmagundi prize, the \$500. Clarke one and, finally, the Carnegie award fell in his lap. In spite of fame and success, he still continued the bohemian habits of his youth and brought some of the colour of the Latin Quarter to Greenwich village. He lived in New York until his death. It was at his special request that he was buried in Wichita among his old frontier friends, on a hilltop that overlooks the city that

had arisen while he was making a name for himself in foreign lands.

Noble belongs to no single school of painting. He was of course aware of the work of the impressionists in France but was untouched by cubism or any of the isms of the after war period. He had an extraordinary memory and never painted from a model or with the landscape before him. One look was enough to fix a scene in his mind and his favorite explanation of his painting was Whistler's tenet, "art is creation and not imitation." One of his most famous paintings, "The Run" is now in the Phillips collection in Bartlesville. This memorial of the mad rush for land in Oklahoma in 1889 was a gesture to Noble's youth, as he had taken part in the run but, with his characteristic generosity, had turned over his land to a family with many children which had not been successful in claiming a suitable section.

There will be twenty-five canvases in the exhibition and it will be opened on Sunday, October 1st. The traveling group will be augmented with several examples from the Wichita Museum collection.

THE DISASTERS OF WAR: The acquisition of a complete set of the superb aquatints by Francesco Goya in which he condemns the cruelty and futility of war, was announced this summer. The small group shown at that time created so much interest, that a much larger series, some fifty, will be installed in the South Loan Gallery and remain through the month of October.

"A chronicle of war, but one which portrays not just historical even but what war means to human life everywhere; the unleashing of rage, the horror and misery which follow in the train of war. Goya shows how men, reeling in a wild intoxication, scarcely human any longer, hurling themselves at one another, grappling for each others lives, wade and die in blood. Murder and rapine, sanctuaries desecrated, villages burned, houses collapsing, men horribly tortured and women struck down, taken as prizes, fighting for their honor; - like a nightmare all this moves before the observer's eye, unrolling a picture of war as horrible as can well be conceived."

The "Disasters of War" have been thus described. Through all the plates we are conscious that Goya spared no one in his condemnation, and least of all, War. Reading our newspapers to-day, we realize that these plates are as pertinent as they were over one hundred years ago. War and the savagery of man have changed very little. To be sure, Goya depicts no airplanes dropping bombs on helpless non-combatants, no mangling shrapnel or poison gas, but his bitter accusations are still valid. These prints are the strongest preachment against war that man has ever produced.

This series has special interest, as it is the first rare printing of 1863. Although Goya produced the plates in the early 1820's, he died soon after and it would seem that his preachment was too severe as prints of them were not made until forty years after he had etched them. This set comes from the collection of Dr. Julius Hoffman of Vienna and it was from these very prints that he wrote his monumental catalogue of "The Disasters of War" in 1907.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: A new acquisition, "A View in Bologna" by the English artist, Richard Parkes Bonington, will be featured as the masterpiece for the month of October.

Bonington was one of the rare geniuses of the English School. He lived only 27 years, yet in that brief time he left a lasting impression on the artists of his own country and those of France. It is not an exaggeration to rank his influence with that of the landscapist, Constable, in redirecting nineteenth century painting to a study of nature itself.

He was born in Nottingham in 1801, the son of an artist and his first lessons in painting were received from his father. He had little true schooling, but his many excursions into the fields about his native town gave him an amazing knowledge of nature that he used to advantage later. When only thirteen he developed a great passion for the sea which he had never seen. He read stories of it, studied paintings of it, and his sketches of the ocean at the period were remarkable for one who had no first hand knowledge.

Bonington soon learned all that his father had to teach and was accordingly sent to Paris to study. He hated the formal class work, but learned much from his copying of the masterpieces in the Louvre and much of the realistic fidelity of the Dutch and the rich colouring of the Venetians that are seen in his mature work can be traced to this influence. In Paris he made many influential friends and his great talent and natural modesty endeared him to them all.

October 1, 1939

Some of them were instrumental in his meeting the great Sir Thomas Lawrence who later said that Bonington had more talent than all the younger English painters. It was with great regret, then, that his untimely death from a brain fever was announced to the art world. His life had been short, but his influence great. His knowledge of the true colours of nature, the rich greens of the foreground, the silvery distances, did much to turn all landscape painters from the use of dull, brownish foliage that had been the fashion since the 17th century. The luminosity of his water colours, a technique in which he excelled, did much to direct the attention of such men as Delacroix and Gericault to a study of colour and gave the entire direction of the 19th century French school of painting.

Our "View in Boulogne" is a typical work, silvery, luminous, almost impressionistic in its presentation. The masterly handling of the ships, the gay and picturesque confusion of the port, show how much he loved the sea. The passages of still-life, the humorous genre scenes, show his technical ability and his keen observation.

Formerly in the famous Widener Collection, this typical canvas is a fine representation of a young artist whose influence in the study of nature is still felt among the painters of today.

WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURES: The Director has announced that the Wednesday Evening Lectures for the entire season will be devoted to a survey of French Painting, from the earliest manifestations in illuminations and frescos to the surrealists of today. The French School is the only one which has developed consistently from its inception in the middle ages up to the present time. It is still, as it was all through the 18th and 19th centuries, the most influential single school.

The permanent collection is exceptionally rich in examples of French Painting and these will be of inestimable value in tracing the growth of the school. It is planned also to hold through the winter, a series of loan exhibitions which will augment the permanent collection and add interest to the lecture series. Several local schools and colleges, notably Teachers College, are presenting the series as part of their art courses. Outlines of the lectures will again be available and it is planned to open the library more frequently for allied reading and study.

The opening lecture will be given on Wednesday Evening, October 18th, at 8:00 o'clock in Atkins Auditorium. It will include an introduction and an explanation of the scope and the importance of the school. Slides from the permanent collection will furnish the highlights of the six centuries to be considered. The second lecture on October 25th will deal with the background on which painting was formed, the fine religious illuminations and the frescoes that decorate the Romanesque churches of the 11th century. A number of these have just been discovered in the Loir Valley, and were studied last summer by the Director.

All the lectures will be given by the Director, Mr. Paul Gardner. The Gallery is open every Wednesday Evening from seven until ten and there is no admission charge either to the Gallery or the lectures.

FRIENDS OF ART: The Wednesday Morning Lecture series for the members of The Friends of Art will be resumed in October. They are held every second and fourth Wednesday of the month in the Library at 11:00 A.M. and open only to members.

On October 11th, the Director will speak on the loan exhibition of Paintings by John Noble, using canvases from the group as illustrations. October 25th, the important summer exhibitions at the World Fairs in New York and San Francisco will be discussed and the new Fall Shows in New York Galleries.

All readers of the News Flashes interested in joining the Friends of Art and assisting them in their important work of building a collection of contemporary American Art for the Gallery, are invited to communicate with Mrs. Herbert V. Jones, 823 West 55th Street.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES: The free activities for children, which are available on Saturdays to any visitor to the Gallery, were started on September 17th. The game tray with its assortment of Hunt and Color Scraps and a variety of question games, is conducted by some member of the Educational Staff in Kirkwood Hall, from ten in the morning until 4:30 in the afternoon.

Twenty-five Junior Docents, who are studying the Gallery Masterpieces section by section and eventually hope to qualify as junior guides to groups of visitors, welcomed three new members to their ranks last week and cordially invite any interested boys and girls to join them at one

October 1, 1939

o'clock every Saturday afternoon.

"Drawing for Fun" begins at 2:00 o'clock in the Atkins Auditorium. All you need is a desire to participate in this gallery activity. Drawing boards, big black crayons and paper are provided, and you won't need special talent in drawing to enjoy the fun in the Auditorium, or the hunt for masterpieces upstairs which follows.

Registration for the Saturday morning drawing and crafts classes for boys and girls from 7 to 18 years of age will begin on October 7th. The enrollment fee of \$1.00 is required for the 26 Saturdays, beginning the 14th of October and ending April 20th, and an additional charge of thirty-five cents is made in some classes where individual supplies are furnished. In order to acquaint each child with the beauty and interest which the Gallery collection holds for him, he is led to study the collection by participating in some creative effort, based on the inspiration he finds in the treasures of the Gallery. Drawing, clay modeling, general activities (a crafts class) and marionettes will be offered this year.

The Little Museum for Young Moderns will open Saturday, September 30th for the fall season, with an exchange exhibit from the children's classes of the Montreal Museum.

CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER

Sun.,	October 1,	3:30	- Auditorium - Concert - Federal Concert Orchestra
Sat.,	" 7,	10:00	- North Door - Registration for Saturday Classes.
Sun.,	" 8,	3:30	- Auditorium - Concert - Miss Ethel Kelly
Wed.,	" 11,	11:00	- Library - Friends of Art Study Class
Sun.,	" 15,	3:30	- Auditorium - Concert - Sigma Alpha Iota
Wed.,	" 18,	8:00	- Auditorium - Lecture - French Painting - Mr. Gardner
Sun.,	" 22,	3:30	- Auditorium - Concert - Amy Winning
Wed.,	" 25,	11:00	- Library - Friends of Art Study Class
Wed.,	" 25,	8:00	- Auditorium - Lecture, French Painting Mr. Gardner
Sun.,	" 29,	3:30	- Auditorium - Concert - Dean Allen Verhines

William Rickhill Nelson Gallery of Art
Atkins Museum of Fine Arts
Kansas City, Missouri

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